

# critical digest

Vol. II No. 25

April 10, 1950

The Weekly That Keeps You Informed of the Current Broadway Critical Scene

## N.Y. Openings This Week

Cry of the Peacock-Mansfield, 4/11/50. Opening of Cecil Robson's adaptation of Jean Anouilh's play scheduled for 4/6/50 was delayed due to illness of Raymond Lovell. Directed by Martin Ritt, produced by James Colligan and Donald Medford, the cast features Oscar Karlweis and Lillie Darves.

With A Silk Thread-Lyceum, 4/12/50. Claire Luce and Phillip Huston star in new Missa Shelley play. Produced by Irving Kaye Davis and staged by Miss Shelley.

## The Magazine Critics View the New Play

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck, 3/29/50. In spite of the many words of praise for the fine acting of Helen Hayes, the wonderful work of her supporting cast, and the beautiful scenery, most of the weekly reviewers considered Joshua Logan's adaptation of Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard" too static and dull to recommend for an evening's entertainment. Critics of the Christian Science Monitor and Billboard considered the script a worthy vehicle for the star's talents, but the others felt different. Gabriel, Cue, summed up the feelings of several of the critics when he stated that Logan turned the pure wine of Chekhov into cloudy sugar water. Hobe, Variety suggested the play would be better if some of the off stage incidents were enacted in view of the audience.

## Shows That Closed

Miss Liberty-Imperial Theatre, 7/15/49-4/8/50. Irving Berlin musical with book by Robert Sherwood, drew seven "pro" reviews from the 30 critics rated. Most of the critics were disappointed that the all-star production team of Berlin, Sherwood and Hart didn't come up with something more original.

The Man-Fulton, 1/19/50-4/8/50. Mel Dinelli melodrama, adapted from his own radio play, won the support of nine reviewers. The acting of Dorothy Gish and Don Hammer fared much better. The author, who is abroad, is trying to interest Hugh Beaumont in producing the play in London.

## Theatre Arts Rates the Current Plays

Arms and the Girl and The Happy Time were panned by the monthly's critic. The former because its three talented performers weren't allowed to carry the ball until it was too late; the latter because farce took over in the early scenes. Recommended were The Cocktail Party, The Devil's Disciple, As You Like It, The Innocents and Come Back, Little Sheba.

## News and Notes

Hi Phillips, World Telegram and Sun, is doing a sketch for Bobby Clark's Peep Show...Louis Calta, Times, returns to his desk after minor surgery...Theatre Guild's Radio Box Office program is now heard twice daily...ABC network broadcast presentation of N.Y. Drama Critic's Circle Awards...Antoinette Perry Awards of the American Theatre Wing were broadcast over WOR, New York...Convention Theatre Ticket Service, 11 East 44th Street, opened for business this week...53 Off Broadway groups have merged into a single producing unit...Sam Zolotow, Times, was re-elected president of Drama Desk, reporters luncheon club...Grace George, The Velvet Glove, received the 1950 medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters for "beauty of speech on the American stage"...Rodgers and Hammerstein turned down an offer of \$350,000 for a one time presentation of South Pacific on TV...Brooks Atkinson, Times, wrote the introduction to W.A. Darlington's "The World of Gilbert & Sullivan".

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' The Green Room Department '  
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THE CRITICS VOTE...N.Y. Drama Critics Circle took several votes to decide upon their awards, but they needed only one vote to down Coleman, Mirror, who suggested the critics meet at regular luncheon meetings. As expected the awards went to The Member of the Wedding, The Cocktail Party and The Consul. Watt, Post, who agreed with the winning slate, felt that his colleagues had made intelligent choices. Garland, Journal American, who voted for Come Back, Little Sheba felt like a square peg in a round hole. While Pollock, Compass, wished he had realized Regina was eligible for his vote. LEE-LEEE

IDEA OF THE WEEK...Comment along Broadway that the name of the Plymouth Theatre is to be renamed in honor of Arthur Hopkins, who had his office there, brings the hope from Morehouse, WT&S, that some day N.Y. playhouses will be named after Winthrop Ames, Charles Frohman and John Drew.

ADD "FIRST PERSON"...Atkinson, Times, answered Variety's survey which reported on his lack of using the first person pronoun in his reviews. It is a matter of paper policy. He feels that that use of the first person indicates that the views expressed are merely the personal opinions of the critics rather than the official judgments of the paper. He uses "I" more liberally in the Sunday articles because he has more leeway.

SUPERLATIVES AND CIRCUSES...Critics have been known to condemn plays because the proceedings reminded them of three ring circuses, but three critics covered the opening of the Ringling Brothers circus at Madison Square Garden letting the superlatives drop where they may. Sheaffer, Eagle, and Pollock, Compass, borrowed the press agent's rantings for their "pro" reviews, while Rice, Post, in a milder tone enjoyed the long show.

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' Interview Round Up '  
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CARSON McCULLERS...Diverse facts collected by Morehouse, WT&S, during a visit with the author of The Member of the Wedding: She hasn't seen the play since the opening. The money she is making is all going for doctor bills. She has a bad case of wanderlust, but never does anything about it. She cuts her own hair. It took her five and a half years to write the book, four years to do the play. She hates to write articles to make money.

HENRY FONDA...Mister Roberts is a much better show now than on opening night, the star told Torre, WT&S. The cast has discovered things in the script it never realized then, they have worked on characterizations until they know each person thoroughly. Fonda cried when he saw the fine acting performance of Helen Hayes in The Wisteria Trees, he admitted.

MARLON BRANDO...Tex and Jinx, Herald Tribune, were just flabbergasted by the amazing career of The Streetcar Named Desire. Brando gave them a run-through of his route since the hit show closed in New York. It included posing as a beggar in France, and explaining to the Unemployment Compensation Board that he was broke though his salary last year was \$29,000. He will be seen in the picture, "The Men".

GIAN CARLO MENOTTI..."The words come to me enclosed in the music", the three way boy wonder said to Rice, Post, in answer to the usual question. Now that The Consul is rolling, he must write the opera NBC television has commissioned him to do.

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! Off Broadway !  
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THE MISER...Two more critics journeyed to the tiny Walt Whitman theatre to praise Theatre Classics production of the Moliere comedy. Garland, Journal American, found every member of the cast worthy, the direction perfect. McDonald, Billboard, enjoyed the show, but didn't think director Dan Levin realized the full humor in the classic.

Around the Town...Hanging on Union Square, the play poem by H.T.Tsiang, enchanted Pollock, Compass. The actor-poet-playwright presents his poem every Saturday night at 225 West 46th Street...The Greener Grass a new play by Edward Davidson presented by Actors Study in Harlem, received unfavorable review from Variety reporter. He considered the play about a Negro film actress who passes for a white lacking in emotional impact...The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet, Shaw's "sermon in crude melodrama" was billed as "second rate Shaw, but first rate fun" by Garland, Journal American, after viewing the production at the Neighborhood Playhouse...The Pied Piper of Hamelin, presented by the Children's World Theatre, charmed children and drama editors when Fumke, Times, took his charges to see the Bette Butterworth play based on Browning's poem.

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! Lighter Stuff !  
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People with famous names living in N.Y. discovered by Sobol, Journal American. Bernard Shaw at 35 West 81st Street. A dentist named Shakespeare at 800 Eighth Avenue...Vice-President Berkley stepped on the hat of Rice, Post, at the opening of "Riding High" at Front Royal, Va....The interior theatre sequences in "All About Eve" a motion picture about a Broadway theatre, will be filmed at the Curren Theatre, San Francisco, because no theatre in Hollywood looks as if it could be a Broadway theatre ADD Nathan Legend: The critic agreed to read the manuscript of a pretty young blonde playwright. "Good writing" he commented, referring to the handwriting...Will Mahoney offers Winchell the story about the drama critic who returned home late from a flop show. "I overslept", was his excuse.

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! Key to NYC Criticism At A Glance !  
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Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them, not if they think they will be hits. "So-So" means the critic did not state directly if he recommended the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening. Photostats of reviews may be obtained at 25 cents each to subscribers, 50 cents each to others.

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|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. NY Times                | 11. Newark News         | 21. Catholic World  |
| 2. NY Herald Tribune       | 12. Women's Wear Daily  | 22. Commonweal      |
| 3. NY News                 | 13. Daily Worker        | 23. Cue             |
| 4. NY Mirror               | 14. Wall Street Journal | 24. Chr.Sci.Monitor |
| 5. NY Compass (Star, PM)   | 15. Journal of Commerce | 25. Sat.Review Lit. |
| 6. NY Post                 | 16. George Jean Nathan  | 26. Newsweek        |
| 7. NY Sun (Morehouse)      | 17. Morning Telegraph   | 27. Time            |
| 8. NY Journal American     | 18. Variety             | 28. Nation          |
| 9. NY World Telegram & Sun | 19. Billboard           | 29. New Republic    |
| 10. Brooklyn Eagle         | 20. Theatre Arts        | 30. New Yorker      |

Arms and the Girl-46th Street Theatre, 2/2/50. Pro: 3-4-5-10-11-12-14-15-17-19-23-24-30. Con: 1-7-8-16-18-20-29. So-So: 2-6-9-26-27.

As You Like It-Cort, 1/26/50. Pro: 3-4-6-7-9-10-11-12-16-17-18-19-20-22-26-29. Con: 1-2-23-24-25-27-30. So-So: 5-8-14-28.

Caesar and Cleopatra-National, 12/21/49. Pro: 26 votes. Con: 5-8-13. So-So: 9



Clutterbuck-Biltmore, 12/3/49. Pro: 3-5-6-7-8-12-15-17-19-20-21-23-27-30.  
Con: 1-9-11-13-16-18-22-24-26-28-29. So-So: 2-4-10-14.

The Cocktail Party-Miller, 1/2/50. Pro: 2-3-4-5-6-7-8-10-11-12-15-17-18-19-20-23-24-26-27-28. Con: 1-9-14-22-25-29. So-So: 16-30.

Come Back, Little Sheba-Booth, 2/15/50. Pro: 1-5-8-9-10-11-14-16-17-18-19-20-22-23-26-29. Con: 2-4-7-12-27. So-So: 3-6-30.

The Consul-Barrymore, 3/15/50. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-7-8-9-10-11-12-13-14-15-16-17-18-19-24-26-27-28-30. So-So: 6.

Death of a Salesman-Morosco, 2/10/49. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29. So-So: 27.

Detective Story-Hudson, 3/23/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-14-15-17-18-19-20-21-22-23-26-27-30.

The Devil's Disciple-Royale, 12/8/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-5-6-8-9-10-11-12-18-19-20-22-23-24-26-29. Con: 30. So-So: 16.

G Gentlemen Prefer Blondes-Ziegfield, 12/8/49. Pro: 20 votes. Con: 6-21-28-  
So-So: 16-22-27. None: 25.

Great To Be Alive-Winter Garden, 3/23/50. Pro: 2-3-6-9-12-16-17. Con: 1-5-7-8-10-11-14-18-23-26-27. So-So: 4-19.

The Happy Time-Plymouth, 1/24/50. Pro: 19 votes. Con: 5-6-7-20-26-27-30.

I Know My Love-Shubert, 11/1/49. Pro: 21 votes. Con: 5-16-22-27-28-29.

The Innocents-Playhouse, 2/1/50. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 2-4-28-29-30.

Kiss Me, Kate-Century, 12/31/48. Pro: 28 votes. Con: 29.

Lost In The Stars-Music Box, 10/30/49. Pro: 1-2-3-5-6-7-10-11-12-14-15-17-18-19-23-26. Con: 8-9-13-20-21-22-24-25-28-29-30. So-So: 4-27.

The Member of the Wedding-Empire, 1/5/50. Pro: 25 votes. So-So: 2-27-30. Con: 16

Mister Roberts-Alvin, 2/13/48. Pro: 24 votes. Con: 21-24. So-So: 13-16-17.

Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep-Broadhurst, 3/2/50. Pro: 2-10-12-15-19-22-30.  
Con: 1-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-14-16-17-18-23-27. So-So: 26.

South Pacific-Majestic, 4/8/49. Pro: 1-2-3-4-6-7-8-9-12-15-17-18-19-20-21-24-25-26-30. Con: 27. So-So: 23.

Texas Li'l Darlin'-Hellinger, 11/25/49. Pro: 3-6-9-12-13-14-15-16-17-21-22-24.  
Con: 1-4-7-8-18-19-23-29-30. So-So: 2-5-10-11-20-26-27.

The Velvet Glove-Golden, 12/26/49. Pro: 15 votes. Con: 2-5-16-18-22-23-27-30.  
So-So: 1-6-29.

Where's Charley?-St. James, 10/11/48. Pro: 16 votes. Con: 6-7-12-13-16-19-22-23-25-26. So-So: 4-27.

The Wisteria Trees-Martin Beck Theatre, 3/29/50. Pro: 1-3-4-5-6-8-11-12-14-15-17-19-24. Con: 7-9-10-23-26-27-30. So-So: 18.

